AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON
STRUCTURAL RACISM PRESENT
IN THE U.S. FOOD SYSTEM
THIRD EDITION

ANEL GUEL
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SUGGESTED CITATION

This third edition includes additional citations collected in fall 2015.

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to provide current research and outreach on structural racism in the U.S. food system for the food system practitioner, researcher, and educator.

The following is an annotated bibliography on selected resources and publications focused on structural racism in the U.S. food system. Structural racism in the U.S. has been defined as the "normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic outcomes for people of color"¹.

Our intention was to look at literature that broadly covered structural racism across the entire food supply chain as well as to examine specific sectors of the chain. We also identified literature that links the social construction of whiteness² and its intentional or consequential impact on structural racism within the United States’ local food movement. We intentionally focused on recent peer-reviewed and grey literature materials that are more national in scope; we also concentrated on materials that included significant references. Blog posts and news or media articles are not included in this bibliography; however, these writings contribute to the discussion on structural racism in the food system and should be part of a more comprehensive education program on this topic.


This paper examines Native American food sovereignty through the lens of 1990s Native North American literature. The author uses two creative writings to illustrate why Native Americans advocate for a rights and culturally based approach to food. Several federal U.S. documents that acknowledge a right to food are outlined here, bringing attention to the forces threatening indigenous food systems.


Highlights the dimensions of class and race within farmers markets and the “green” economy.


Explores the interplay between race and class and the food system; the book’s 15 chapters outline these distinctions along the supply chain from production to consumption.


Identifies and examines two case studies of prevalent pervading white privilege in California. Additionally suggests how farmers’ markets can act as catalysts for anti-racism in the future of food movements.


Develops the concept of food justice and bridges this to activism on sustainable agriculture, food insecurity, and environmental justice.

Describes, through interviews, the realities of current and past food system experiences from the perspective of Southern women of color.


Examines how Latino residents experience, think about, and address new exclusionary practices in the space of alternative food activism in Boston.


This study addresses the question of whether all communities have equal access to foods in order to make healthy dietary choices.


An analysis of the dimensions of structural racism and how it helps create and sustain areas of low food/income access.


A report focused on Latina women and their contribution to the U.S. food supply chain.


A report delving into the intricacies of the H-2 program, a federal program that allows foreign workers rightful employment under various farm-related jobs.

Discusses the various ways that race shapes people’s lives, including racialized outcomes of food production, processing, and consumption.


A set of stories that focus on the challenges faced and resilience of U.S. Black, Latino, Native, and Asian farmers.


A curation of five articles documenting evidence of racism in U.S. restaurant industry.


An article outlining discrimination by the USDA and reviewing five major U.S. agricultural discrimination court cases; two involving African American farmers, and one each involving Native American farmers, Hispanic farmers, and female farmers.


Provides an analysis of U.S. agriculture and Latino farm workers and the obstacles the workers confront within the food system. The author draws from his experiences working with CATA (El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas, or the Farmworkers Support Committee).


Provides a set of policy recommendations for President Obama’s administration that will build equity and sustainability for all in the U.S. food system.

Provides a useful literature review on antiracist food scholarship and analyzes the benefits of linking organic farming work to indigenous food sovereignty.


An overview of the *Garcia v. Vilsack* case, in which Hispanic farm workers filed a lawsuit against the USDA for credit transaction and disaster benefit discrimination. The overview discusses the exhaustive measures the farm workers took to argue their case. It also draws upon and reviews three other cases, one each involving African American farmers, Native American farmers, and female farmers.


These case studies focus on the process of working with recent Latino immigrants in farmer trainings. The outside organizers inadvertently strengthened a culture of whiteness, as they did not share the same goals as the Latino immigrant participants.


A report using an equity lens to examine the funding behind projects and programs related to food.


This report takes a look behind occupations in the U.S. food industry: farm workers (production), slaughterhouse and other processing facilities workers (processing), warehouse workers (distribution), grocery store workers (retail), and restaurant and food service workers (service).


Explores the concept of food oppression through the USDA's role in the milk industry.

The article provides an inside perspective on how certain cultural practices within American food justice movements perpetuate oppression in the very organization that are fighting to end such oppression. It suggest a shift in focus to include more activist involvement in cultural work.


Presents the multi-institutional racial inequalities in the food system and looks at access, production, distribution and labor and affordability issues in the food system.


A review of 115 sources since 1971 outlining research on black farms and land loss.


Opens up the dialogue behind food justice, taking a closer look at the history and current attempts to change the system.


Examines the condition of black farmers in the Southern U.S. states, focusing on their challenges and successes in the face of structural inequalities as well as grassroots organizations aimed at the sustainable livelihood of black farmers.


Argues how projects aiming at bringing "good food" to others often reflect the "white desires" of the creators of the projects rather than the communities served.

This study surveyed managers of farmers markets and community-supported agricultural enterprises and found a general discomfort and an “if they only knew” approach to the lack of involvement of minorities within the local food movement.


This paper critiques the current state of the alternative food movement, focusing on the cultural politics of alternative food, analyzing the coding of the alternative food movement that has led to racial inequities. The paper also calls for more inclusivity than found in the current attempts to transform the food system.


The article identifies and addresses the faults found within alternative food movements as well as social injustice in the labor sector of large food corporations.


Examines federal court cases that address marketplace racial discrimination and accompanying legal issues and relevant legislation.


This paper looks at the situation of Latino dairy farm workers in Wisconsin to describe how recent escalations in immigration enforcement and changes in migration practices affect the ability of the state to continue to serve two of its key “productive” functions within agriculture.

The article examines employers’ roles in and incentives for segregating labor relations along lines of nativity and race on Wisconsin dairy farms.


Examines ethnic segregation in the America’s food system traced back to its roots as an output - maximizing system, calling for a systematic approach to policy making to better incorporate research and communities.


A look into the role food system workers, farmers, and farm workers play in the United States’ Northeastern food system.


A report outlining the interplay between good food, good jobs, and race throughout the entire value chain, including production, processioning, distribution, retail, and waste.


Recounts the progression from slavery to land ownership for black Americans, showing how along the way, systemic variables undermined the black Americans’ land/farm ownership rights.


This is a commentary on marginalization of migrant workers in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia agriculture industry. It covers the history of racism in this particular agricultural industry, and problems faced by migrant workers today in the industry. The paper recommends possible ways to ease the challenges faced by migrant workers in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia.

This commentary highlights the present connection between the greater capitalist structure and the food system and how this connection has encouraged the racial and social class discrimination present in the food system today. The paper identifies a greater understanding/shift of the capitalist structure as a whole to be a key factor in realizing the change needed in the food system that will move toward a more equitable and inclusive food/social system.


Summarizes the concept of food justice and explains its role in influencing food systems change.


This is a study conducted as a collaborative effort with a Native American community in northern California to assess barriers to healthy and culturally appropriate food access. Using a framework called the Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments (THRIVE), the community in the study determined racial injustice as a major barrier and worked to propose policy changes to improve food access.


This report specifically looks at the concept of worker equity within the food and agriculture industry. It uses the top 100 U.S. companies in food and agriculture as a way to analyze worker oversight and disclosure, equity policies and practices, compensation, health and safety, supply chain worker treatment, and access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.


Identifying and using an analysis of power and oppression structures, this commentary focuses on why studies of inclusion in food systems perpetuate both privilege and disadvantage.

This report summarizes “good food” and “good jobs,” two movements that function parallel to one another, although the lack of both good food and good jobs negatively impacts communities of color. The report suggests that food and labor groups actually have fundamental shared interests and should work together.


Uses data and personal worker accounts to highlight and illustrate racial and gender bias in five sections of the U.S. food system: farming, food processing, food distribution, food retail, and restaurants.


Examines how access and acceptance to good quality food is shaped and changed through the process of gentrification.


Brings together academic literature centered on food and addresses racial and class inequalities as well as the concept of neoliberalism in the food system.


Addresses the whiteness that is socio-spatially created in farmers markets in Central Valley, California.


Examines inequalities in the food system and particularly notes the impacts they bring to urban African-American communities.

Confronts the issue of defining good food and the discrepancies associated with that definition. Examines racial assumptions in food systems education, providing an alternative educational framework as a proposed solution.

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Demonstrates the important role agriculture plays in the Midwestern economy and argues that the United States’ current immigration policies fail to serve the needs of the agriculture sector, including year-round immigrant labor in crop and livestock production as well as agricultural processing, handling, and manufacturing.

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This book chapter is an exploration of unjust treatment of Asian immigrants in agriculture over the span of more than a century, starting with the working-class Chinese in the late 1800s, expanding on Japanese farmers in the early 1900s, and ending with the struggles of the Hmong people from 1975 to 2009. The section on the Hmong workers focuses on the burdensome implementation of worker’s compensation laws.

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This paper examines the need for more diversity in food systems work, citing specifically the limited definition of "good food" in food systems work. A solution is provided in the suggested implementation of a diversity/empowerment model.

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A study of the Karuk Tribe of California and the hardships of their food environment. Specifically, the study examines how the Karuk people have been impacted by institutional racism, racial formation, racial projects, environmental injustice, food insecurity, genocide, relocation, and forced assimilation.

Examines the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program as it functions as a coercive migrant worker regime in Canada today, highlighting participating workers’ opinions on this program, and showing how colonialism is manifested in Canada’s conventional agriculture industry.


Examines gender and racial barriers linked to diversity requirements of land-grant institutions in the United States.


This commentary offers three perspectives from a land grant university (campus staff, field Extension, and graduate student) outlining structural racism in the local food movement, identifying the potential promise of the Michigan Good Food Charter to address racial equity issues in the food system, and suggesting tools that land grant university researchers and educators can use to begin to understand structural racism.


Contains a timeline that re-examines the evolution of the local food movement in the U.S. in the context of the four elements of good food: healthy, fair, affordable, and “green.”


This article analyzes two case studies of community food organizations in Seattle, Washington to identify the ways in which inclusion initiatives fail to address the resilience of power asymmetries supporting inclusion disparities in the food system. It includes a review of geography literature, and highlights ways for food activists to revamp their efforts to truly encourage racial inclusion in the food system.

This report identifies the ways in which low wages in the food service industry disproportionally affect people of color and women. Highlights the role of the National Restaurant Association and Darden (the latter is the world’s largest full-service restaurant corporation) and how an increase in the minimum wage and tipped sub-minimum wage would help to increase race and gender equity in the food service industry.


This commentary provides a personal account of research on food systems that stresses the importance of solidarity and sweat equity in the fight for food justice. Reviews the importance of cooperation of researchers and communities to answer questions of social equity and structural inequalities that are ever changing.


Speaks about the unacknowledged white privilege behind community food organizations where whiteness needs to be critically analyzed, particularly when working on projects that impact communities of color.


The author uses feminist and materialist theories to look behind progressive or liberal whiteness around the United States’ local and organic food movement and implications for communities of color.


This short film looks at the food system present in Arizona and other U.S. borderlands. Here, a diverse group of people come together and mitigate challenges the food system presents via food banks and community and home gardening.

A commentary that examines place-based interventions as a means to attain equity in the food system, calling first for an equitable and inclusive environment, and secondly an historical understanding for which to base this transformation.


This paper describes the discriminatory actions of the EPA in choosing not to prioritize cleanup of hazardous waste sites on Native American lands, thereby affecting the local food supply of the impacted tribes. The paper reviews the history of the federal-Indian trust relationship and describes the responsibilities of the government in protecting native people and their lands.


This study uses qualitative analysis to explore the race-class tensions around food and gardening in a low-income urban neighborhood in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.


This commentary calls for a combined objective and perceived view of food access to gain a more complete and accurate result from policies. The term “access” is broken into five categories to achieve this goal: acceptability, accessibility, accommodation, affordability, and availability.


Highlights the need for more culturally sensitive interventions in the Hispanic community about food to eliminate food access barriers related to linguistic and cultural disconnects.